

The first in ensuring the qualified person for your vacancy is to have an accurate position description. The position description is the official record of the duties and responsibilities assigned to a position or group of positions by a supervisor/manager in order to accomplish a specific job. It is the position that is classified, not the person assigned. It is the work assigned and performed that are evaluated. The special capabilities or qualifications of the employee generally are not factors that influence the position's classification.

Understanding the position that is to be classified is fundamental to the process of assigning the correct title, series, and grade. It is imperative that the position description be carefully developed to capture the important or critical features of the job. The recruitment and performance evaluation process will have no value if the position description is based on inadequate or misunderstood information. Critical to fully understanding the position is consideration of such factors as the position's relationship to other positions, its primary purpose or reason for existence, the mission and responsibility of the organization in which it is located, and the qualifications required to do the work.

The DOC developed a Position Description (PD) Library to provide managers a database of generic position descriptions, intended to speed up the classification process and facilitate timely recruitment. It is, however, a NOAA requirement to use PD Library descriptions when a new position description is created for a General Schedule (GS) or Wage Grade (WG) position in a series and grade covered by the PD Library (except under Demo). PD Library descriptions can be found at [http://ohrm.os.doc.gov/PD\\_Library/prod01\\_000366](http://ohrm.os.doc.gov/PD_Library/prod01_000366).

### *Determining the Series*

The series determination is normally not a difficult problem for most positions. The correct series is usually apparent from reviewing the duties and responsibilities assigned to the position. In most cases, the occupational series will represent the primary work of the position, the highest level of work performed, and the paramount qualifications required. The Federal General Schedule Occupational Series can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/html/gsseries.asp> and the Federal Wage System Occupations Series can be found at <http://www.opm.gov/fedclass/html/fwseries.asp>.

### **General Schedule**

The General Schedule series can be divided into five "categories" of work; specifically,

- **professional**, e.g., attorney, medical officer, biologist;
- **administrative**, e.g., human resource specialist, budget analyst, general supply specialist;
- **technical**, e.g., forestry technician, accounting technician, pharmacy technician;
- **clerical**, e.g., secretary, office automation clerk, data transcriber, mail clerk;
- **others** are not so easy to determine, e.g., Electronics Mechanic, WG-2604 versus Information Technology (IT) Management Series, GS-2210.

### *Professional or Nonprofessional Series*

Work classified to a professional series requires academic education and training in the principles, concepts, and theories of the occupation. This requirement is called a “positive education requirement” and is common to nearly all professional occupational series. Professional work involves creativity, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation.

Closely allied to professional work is work performed by nonprofessional support personnel. The duties and responsibilities, may appear very similar to those of professional employees in related kinds of work. Technical work, however, is normally planned and managed by professional employees. The technician carries out or implements plans or projects based on extensive experience and supplemental on-the-job training rather than on formal academic education in the discipline itself.

### *Administrative or Support Series*

Support work usually involves proficiency in one or more functional areas or in certain limited phases of a specified program. Normally a support position can be identified with the mission of a particular organization or program. The work usually does not require knowledge of the interrelationships among functional areas or organizations. Employees who perform support work follow established methods and procedures. Support personnel typically learn to do the work on the job through what may sometime be many years of experience. They also may attend specific training courses related to their work.

Administrative work, on the other hand, primarily requires a high order of analytical ability combined with a comprehensive knowledge of (1) the functions, processes, theories, and principles of management; and (2) the methods used to gather, analyze, and evaluate information. Administrative work also requires skill in applying problems solving techniques and skill in communicating effectively both orally and in writing. Administrative positions do not require specialized education, but they do involve the type of skills (analysis, research, writing, judgment) typically gained through college level education or through progressively responsible experience. Even though employees who perform administrative work may be assigned to one functional area of overall occupation or program, they are required to understand the interrelationships between their specific area of expertise and other functions and programs

### *Mixed Series*

A “mixed series” position involves work covered by more than one occupational series. For most positions, the grade-controlling work determines the series. Sometimes, however, the lower grade duties are more closely related to the basic purpose of the position.

### *Interdisciplinary Professional Series*

An alternate method of determining the series for some professional positions is the interdisciplinary approach. An interdisciplinary position involves duties and responsibilities that are closely related to more than one professional occupation. As a result, the knowledge and experience requirements can be met by persons qualified

in either of the professional series involved. Interdisciplinary classification is used principally for positions in mathematical, scientific, or engineering disciplines. Other combinations of work and qualification requirements logically would not meet the intent of interdisciplinary. The method of determining series is used for the sole purpose of adding flexibility to staffing professional positions. This flexibility allows the qualification requirements for the position to extend beyond those for a single series. More information can be found at

[http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto\\_guide/howto\\_recruit\\_interdisc.html](http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/howto_guide/howto_recruit_interdisc.html) .

### **Federal Wage System (FWS)**

The Federal Wage System (FWS) is the major pay system covering trade, craft, and labor occupations in the Federal Government. The categories of pay plans in the FWS are Wage Grade (WG), Wage Leader (WL), and Wage Supervisor (WS). The pay for these employees is set in accordance with local prevailing rates.

### **Wage Marine**

The wage marine personnel include licensed masters, mates and engineers, and unlicensed members of the engine, steward, and deck departments. In addition, survey and electronic technicians operate and/or maintain the ship's mission, communication and navigation equipment.

### **DOC Demonstration Project**

The DOC Demonstration Project is designed to provide a personnel management system that enhances mission accomplishment and organizational excellence by: recruiting, developing, rewarding and retaining high-performing employees; increasing manager's authority, responsibility and accountability over personnel decisions; and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of human resources management systems.

The DOC Demonstration Project includes a simplified and improved position classification process through pay banding, generic classification standards, an automated classification system and the delegation of position classification authority to managers. Positions are classified according to career paths and pay bands within the career paths. Career paths are categories of occupations grouped by similarities in duties, qualification requirements, pay ranges and career progression. The four separate career paths are Scientific and Engineering (ZP), Scientific and Engineering Technician (ZT), Administrative (ZA), and Support (ZS). A single pay band within a career path normally covers a pay range of two (2) or more grades within the General Schedule (GS).

The **Automated Classification System (ACS)** allows managers to create individualized position descriptions (PDs) by choosing from approved career paths, pay bands, titles, specialties, etc. In addition, ACS allows users to edit existing PDs, save an existing PD as a new PD, delete PDs, and Print PDs. The ACS system can be found at

<http://hr.ohrm.doc.gov/acs/> .

For additional information: [WFMO Contact Lists](#)